N° 95. SATURDAY, *November* 25, 1786.

Here HUNT *may box, or* MAHOMET *may dance.*
JOHNSON.

WHEN I returned from my morning's walk one day of laſt week, *Peter* informed me that a young gentleman had called, who would not tell his name, but promiſed to call again in the evening, and in the mean time left a letter, which he ſaid would inform me who he was. "I think, Sir," ſaid Peter, while I was opening the letter, "that were he a little "older, and had a major wig inſtead of his "own brown hair in round curls on his neck, "that one might diſcover a likeneſs between him "and Colonel *Cauſtic.*" There was ſome reaſon for the reſemblance; for in fact it was a young relation of the Colonel's, who had been two or three years at an Engliſh univerſity, and is now come hither for the winter to ſtudy ſome particular branches at ours. He brought me a letter of introduction from my worthy friend his kinſman, which gave him, in the Colonel's delicate way, a great deal of commendation, though

though I am persuaded, from what I have seen of him, no more than he merits. "He is real-"ly a fine boy," said the Colonel's letter, "and "I think you will like him the better that he "pretends to be no more. He has neither "learned to be a Fop nor a Prig at college; and "though a little flighty and light-headed now "and then, has a soundness at heart that never "deceives one. The lad has a classical taste, "and has written some love-verses that would "not have disgraced better times, when the "women were worthy of them."

When he came in the evening, I found his appearance very prepossessing, and not the less so, that I really imagined I saw some of that resemblance which Peter's sagacity had discovered. Peter laid two covers without my bidding; and the young gentleman accepted the invitation they implied. After our little supper, we got so well acquainted, and felt ourselves so much related through the connection of Colonel Caustic, that the young man, as I wished, forgot the difference of our age and the lateness of his introduction, and we quoted Horace, told college anecdotes, repeated college verses, and laughed at college puns, till midnight.

He pleased me much with the affection he expressed for my old friend and his sister, with whom he had spent several weeks previous to his

his coming hither. “ Don’t you think Miſs “ *Cauſtic*, Sir,” ſaid he, “ one of the moſt ex- “ cellent women in the world? and then her “ brother’s affection for her! methinks I like “ both the better every time he ſpeaks of his “ ſiſter. We were talking one day of a book “ of receipts which ſhe had copied.——“ There “ wants one here, ſaid the Colonel, which my “ ſiſter poſſeſſes beyond any body I know; a “ receipt for making people happy.”——She “ has a way of doing kind things with ſo little “ pretenſion! She had talked lately of getting “ ſome pieces of dreſs from town, and when ſhe “ heard of my ſetting out, had put twenty “ guineas into my hand as her agent in the “ buſineſs; but when ſhe took leave of me, “ ſhe ſaid, ſhe found ſhe ſhould have no occaſion “ for any addition to her wardrobe this year. “ —— But you muſt lay out the twenty “ guineas, ſaid ſhe, in looking at the faſhion- “ able dreſſes of this winter, that you may be “ able to inſtruct me in my purchaſes for the “ next.”

“ You never ſaw the Colonel (continued his “ young friend) in better health or ſpirits than “ he is at preſent. He put one or two of his “ old guns in order on my account, and walked “ out with me himſelf, to ſhew me the grounds “ where the game was to be found, which he

“ ſays

"ſays was almoſt as plentiful this ſeaſon, as it "was when he was a ſhooter."—"Why does "he not come to town?" ſaid I.—"I aſked "him that queſtion, Sir; but he told me he "did not intend to be in town; and yet I be- "lieve he was much the better for his laſt ex- "curſion hither."—"I am perſuaded the jour- "ney would be of ſervice to him."—His young relation ſmiled. "I believe it was not ſo much "the journey to Edinburgh, as the follies he "ſaw there, that did him ſo much good. He "ſwallowed a thouſand impertinences, he ſays, "when here; and his ſiſter tells me he has "chewed the cud on them ever ſince. Every "time he related any of them to her or to me, "he ſeemed to be better pleaſed with himſelf, "and with the times which he calls his own; "though I am happy to believe that he will "live theſe dozen years, to tell us that he has "nothing to do with the preſent times. He "ſays, he does not intend being in town again, "becauſe the novelty that amuſed him the laſt "time he was there is over. I ſhould only find, "ſaid he, the ſame follies and the ſame vices; "the ſame coarſe or frivolous men, and the ſame "vulgar or giddy women, I ſaw there two "winters ago."

"But you may aſſure him, ſaid I, he is miſtaken; "that I have received undoubted intelligence,

" that there is to be no folly, no vice, among us " this winter; that our private society is to be " decent and well-bred, our public places or- " derly and well regulated; that there will be no " bludgeon'd beaux to justle him in his walks, " nor female cavaliers to stare him out of coun- " tenance; that our dinners are to afford the " elegant entertainment of Attic conviviality, " " the feast of reason, and the flow of soul;" " that the tea-tables of the ladies are to be " schools of delicacy, refinement, and instruc- " tive conversation; that Lady Rumpus has " learned silence, old —— sobriety, and his son, " decorum; that our assemblies, instead of " *fine ladies* lolloping through country-dances " with *fine men*, are to be filled with *fine women*, " who are to dance minuets with *fine gentlemen*; " that at our concerts people of fashion are to " listen to the music, and that the music is to be " worth the listening to; that our Theatre—— " But you shall hear what it is to be from better " authority. I received this very morning a " letter on that subject, which, among other " novelties, you may communicate to the " Colonel. Here it is, sealed with a *Shake-* " *speare*'s head, and dated from *Holyroodhouse*."

To the Author of the Lounger.

SIR,

I Presume, from the uniform practice of your predeceſſors, and indeed from ſeveral of your earlier Papers, that the ſtate of the Theatre is by no means a ſubject of indifference to you. In this belief, I make bold to trouble you with a Letter concerning our Scottiſh Stage, which I hope will meet with your attention. I think, Sir, I may preſume to ſay, that I am not an unqualified correſpondent on that ſubject, having paſſed moſt of my life behind the Scenes, in different parts of the kingdom, and have reaſon to flatter myſelf with having been of conſiderable uſe to the Stage, though my labours have not proved ſo advantageous to myſelf as I had reaſon to look for. I was the firſt who brought any thing like diſcipline among *Bayes's Light Horſe*; I had a very principal hand in the Sea in *Harlequin's Invaſion*; and gave the Plan for the conſtruction of the famous Cloud which took up the deities in *Midas*. Theſe, and many other ſervices of equal importance, have been long forgotten. I will make no perſonal reflections, Sir; but Managers are well known not to be always ſo attentive to merit as they

ought to be. I know it has been ſaid, that I was diſmiſſed from the London Theatre, on account of an unfortunate accident, to wit, the falling of a flying dragon, which I had invented for a new Pantomime; by which the Devil and Dr. Fauſtus were both killed on the ſpot. But, in the firſt place, the ſtory is falſe in itſelf, the Doctor having only broke his noſe, and the Devil his tail by the accident; and at any rate, the dragon was not of my conſtruction, but one borrowed from the Opera-houſe, which had been foundered by hard riding in the ballet of *Jaſon and Medea*.

I underſtand, Sir, that it is intended this winter to make a very material improvement on the Theatre at Edinburgh, by bringing down the *Sadler's Wells* Company, to perform here during a conſiderable part of the ſeaſon. I will not have the vanity to ſay, that this was entirely owing to a ſuggeſtion of mine; yet it is certain that I hinted at ſuch an improvement ſeveral months ago, at the houſe of a gentleman, an old acquaintance, with whom I ſometimes take a Sunday's dinner, who is on very intimate terms with the Gentleman who dreſſes the Manager. But whoever may claim the honour of the invention, Sir, I cannot help congratulating this country on the event, which I look on as proceeding from the ſame liberal and enlarged

ſpirit

ſpirit that has given riſe to the Commercial Treaty with France. Undoubtedly a free and full communication and interchange of commodities is of advantage both among Nations and Theatres; and the jealouſies and rivalſhips that uſed to ſubſiſt between contending Houſes was extremely hurtful to all parties. It is the duty of every good citizen to promote an object ſo deſirable as that of a friendly intercourſe and mutual co-operation between ſuch ſocieties, for the entertainment of the public. With ſuch good intentions, I beg leave to lay before you the ſketch of a Plan for the more cloſe and intimate union of the theatrical and dancing or tumbling kingdoms, by their not only occupying the ſame ground, and alternately exhibiting on the ſame ſtage, but by their mutually coaleſcing and incorporating with one another, ſo as to give a Play all the decoration and movement of a Dance or a Tumbling, and a Dance or a Tumbling all the intereſt and buſineſs of a Play. What an excellent entertainment, for inſtance, would Macbeth or Hamlet afford, if the plan of the Drama were preſerved, according to the ancient theatrical mode, and the unfolding and progreſs of it brought forth according to the new or Sadler's Wells ſchool. The Soliloquies might be turned into Hornpipes, the Battles into Country Bumpkins, and the reſpective Courts of Scotland and

Denmark might exhibit themſelves to great advantage in a Cotillon; or the ſolemn ſcenes might be performed on the Slack Wire, the more animated from the Tight Rope, and the buſtle of a full Stage would naturally fall into Feats of Agility and Lofty Tumbling. In *Macbeth*, the *Little Devil* would be quite in his element. In the tragedy of *Venice Preſerv'd*, what a brilliant High Dance might *Pierre* in the ſenate-houſe perform in his chains (which is indeed but one ſtep beyond his ordinary ſtyle of acting in that ſcene); and the ſenators (ſuch of them at leaſt whoſe robes would bear looking at behind) might join the inferior conſpirators as *Figurantes*.

Comedy will eaſily and naturally ſlide into the department of her ſiſter-arts; and as ſhe has already betaken herſelf almoſt entirely to ſinging on the Engliſh Stage, ſhe may with great propriety become a dancer on the Scotch Theatre. As to *Farces* or *petites Pieces*, I think they may admit of a different ſet of performers, and be played with applauſe by actors of the animal creation. *General Jackoo*, of the Sadler's Wells Company, who I'm told has a very quick *ſtudy*, might ſoon be made perfect in *Fribble*; and the wonderful *Engliſh Bull-dog* be brought out in the part of *Major Sturgeon*. It could not but afford pleaſure to every rational and philoſophic mind,

mind, thus to see the lower orders of creation brought forward a ſtep in the ſcale of being, and aſſuming, on the Stage of Edinburgh, a rank and conſequence which partial nature has denied them.

But though the ſuperſtructure of dancing and tumbling is thus propoſed to be raiſed on the old theatrical foundation; yet, Sir, it is by no means any part of my plan to diſcard or render unneceſſary the preſent incumbents of the Theatre. Their exertions will neceſſarily be united with their new aſſociates from Sadler's Wells, to get up, as it is called, the pieces which are to be performed in this new manner; and I have too much knowledge of the extent and verſatility of their genius, not to be convinced that they will eaſily accommodate themſelves to the change. Some of the beſt Tragedians of our preſent company will readily acquire the walk of the Tight-rope; moſt of the Ladies, I am ſure, will have no objection to put themſelves under the tuition of the Devil, in the tumbling way; and ſeveral of the moſt celebrated comic performers are already ſo excellent in the *poſture* line, as to give aſſurance of their arriving at the firſt degree of eminence in that department.

And now, Sir, give me leave to ſtate ſome of the obvious advantages that will ariſe from this

new and improved mode of conducting the Drama.

1*mo*, As the entertainment would be addressed to the eyes, it would allow perfect liberty to the tongues of the audience: of the restraint, in this particular, which arises from the present method of conducting the Drama, the most respectable part of the house have great reason to complain, as the players on the stage speak almost as loud as people of the first distinction in the side boxes.

2*do*, There would be none of that improper or unbecoming freedom or *double entendre*, against which some of the more rigid moralists inveigh, in the dialogue of our late comic performances. If any part of the Pantomime should happen not to be quite so pure as it ought (a grievance which even the spoken plays are liable to in the hands of some actors), it will be easy for the Ladies to turn their eyes half aside, or to cover them with the sticks of their fans: putting one's fingers in one's ears is not so graceful an attitude.

3*tio*, It will very much improve the catastrophe of some of our best English tragedies. *George Barnwell* may then be played, as I once heard a gentleman of this city propose to a Manager, with the hanging thrown into action instead of narrative, as the swing of several actors of the new company can easily be made to imitate that polite

polite entertainment; and ſome of them who at preſent ſhew ſuch dexterity in twiſting their bodies into the collared-eel, and other beautiful forms, will have no difficulty of allowing themſelves to be broke on the wheel in the part of *Pierre*, which being a novelty, and ſomewhat more natural and affecting than the mere preparatives at preſent exhibited, cannot fail of drawing great houſes.

4to, It will evidently tend to facilitate the profeſſion of an actor, and to widen the range from which excellence in that line is to be drawn. As things are at preſent, the Britiſh Stage, from the circumſtance of language, is open only to the natives of England and Ireland; but if Plays are to be danced inſtead of ſpoken, their language, like that of Muſic, will be univerſal. This will remove a hardſhip peculiar to this part of his Majeſty's dominions, which, from its provincial pronunciation, is almoſt entirely excluded from the Stage; but in a natural talent for dancing and feats of agility, is ſuppoſed rather to have the advantage of its ſiſter kingdoms. If the plan I propoſe is adopted, I ſhall not be ſurpriſed, if the diſtrict of *Strathſpey* ſhould produce a ſucceſſor to *Garrick*, and a rival to Mrs. *Siddons*.

Laſtly, It will ſave a great deal of trouble to authors, who are often exceedingly at a loſs

 how

how to carry on the dialogue of a piece through the ſpace of five, or even of three acts. In the improved method I have taken the liberty to ſuggeſt, an author will not only, like ſome of our modern dramatiſts, have no occaſion to write well, but he or ſhe may actually compoſe a very good play, without having ever learned to write or read at all.

Many other advantages might be ſhewn to reſult from this propoſed alteration of the mode of repreſenting theatrical pieces; but I flatter myſelf, that even the imperfect announcement of the plan which I have given, will be ſufficient to intitle it to the favour and patronage of perſons of taſte and knowledge; among whom, without flattery, Sir, I claſs the Author of the Lounger in a very diſtinguiſhed rank.

I have the honour to be, &c.

RICHARD BUSKIN.

I doubt not but it will afford pleaſure to Mr. Buſkin to be told, that my young academical friend approved very much of his propoſal. "In "ancient Greece," ſaid he, "though they did "not carry this matter quite ſo far as your cor-"reſpondent propoſes, yet dancing made a chief "part of the entertainment in dramatic repre-

 "ſentations.

"sentations. The verses indeed of *Sophocles* and "*Euripides* were recited, but as we have no "Sophocleses or Euripideses now, and scarce "any actors who could speak their verses if we "had, I believe Mr. *Buskin*'s plan to be a very "expedient one. I remember one of our fellows "at college, who liked eccentric anecdotes, "used to tell us of a company of Comedians he "fell in with in a country-excursion, who "having, by some little misfortune, lost their "principal actor, gave out their next day's bill "in these words: "On Monday will be pre-"sented the Tragedy of *Hamlet Prince of Den-"mark*; the part of *Hamlet*, for that night, to "be left out.""

I